

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAMA 01685 01 OF 02 261616Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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O 261400Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 3682

INFO SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

CNO WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK IMMEDIATE

COMIDEASTFOR IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANAMA 1685

EXDIS/MILITARY ADDEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE FOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : MARR, MASS, PFOR, BA

SUBJECT : AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER

REF : (A) MANAMA 1681 (B) DAO AMMAN 0738 (251550Z) (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: I MET FOR ONE HOUR WITH PRIME MINISTER MORNING OCT 26. PRIME MINISTER LEFT IMPRESSION THAT THOUGH HIS JUNE INITIATIVE REGARDING EXTENSION OF MIDDLE EAST FORCE TENURE IS NOT DEAD, IT NEEDS REVIVING BY VISIBLE, SUBSTANTIVE USG RESPONSE. HE STRESSED HIS NEED FOR HELP FROM HIS AMERICAN FRIENDS IN DEFENSE AREA IF HE IS TO BE ABLE "TO DO WHAT HE WANTS TO DO" ABOUT MIDDLE EAST FORCE. PRIME MINISTER SAID HE AND CROWN PRINCE/DEFENSE MINISTER PLEASED BY RESULTS DEPSECDEF CLEMENTS MEETING WITH SHAIKH HAMAD (MANAMA 1682) AND HE LOOKS FORWARD TO ARRIVAL OF COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY TEAM. THOUGH HE MENTIONED UNWILLINGNESS OF NEIGHBORS TO GIVE PUBLIC SUPPORT TO MIDEASTFOR, HE DID NOT INDICATE THAT SUCH SUPPORT IS SINE QUA NON OF EXTENSION. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING PRIME MINISTER'S REQUEST TO ME DURING CLEMENTS VISIT OCT 24 THAT I CALL ON HIM SOON, APPOINTMENT WAS ARRANGED FOR 11:30 A.M. OCT 26. PRIME MINISTER WAS CORDIAL IN WELCOMING
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 MANAMA 01685 01 OF 02 261616Z

ME TO BAHRAIN AND I EXPRESSED REGRET THAT WE HAD NOT MET SOONER,

IN WASHINGTON. HE AGREED THAT IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT HE HAD BEEN UNABLE TO ACCEPT THE SECRETARY'S INVITATION SINCE HE HAD BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO SUCH A MEETING FOR SOME TIME AND, AFTER ALL, "THERE WAS SOMETHING OF IMPORTANCE TO DISCUSS".

3. PRIME MINISTER THEN LAUNCHED INTO SERIES OF BRIEF MONOLOGUES ON VARIETY OF SUBJECTS, INCLUDING HIS VISITS TO AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND (HE HAD JUST RECEIVED THE DEPRIMIN OF N.Z.) AND THE U.S. HE EXPRESSED HIS BELIEF IN THE IMPORTANCE TO THE REGION AND TO THE WORLD OF THE US-SAUDI RELATIONSHIP, WITH WHICH I AGREED, AND WENT INTO SOME DETAIL ON THE EVOLUTION OF BAHRAIN-IRAN RELATIONS WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS AMONG THE BEST AMONG ARAB NATIONS WITH IRAN. PRIME MINISTER SEEMED BENT ON DISCUSSING ANY SUBJECT BUT MIDEASTFOR AND AT PAUSE BETWEEN MONOLOGUES I TOOK OCCASION OF HIS OFFER TO "ASK HIM ANYTHING, ANYTIME" TO RAISE ISSUE.

4. I TOLD PRIME MINISTER THAT THERE WAS ONE POINT RAISED DURING CLEMENTS' MEETING WITH AMIR ABOUT WHICH I WOULD APPRECIATE HIS VIEW. WHEN CLEMENTS FIRST INTRODUCED SUBJECT OF MIDEASTFOR TENURE, FOREIGN MINISTER ON BEHALF OF AMIR REPLIED THAT THERE WAS "NOTHING NEW" TO DISCUSS AT THIS TIME AND THAT ANY FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS WOULD BE RAISED THROUGH ME. I SAID I UNDERSTOOD THAT WHAT WAS MEANT WAS THAT AT THAT PARTICULAR MOMENT, PERHAPS DUE TO PRIME MINISTER'S HAVING ONLY THE DAY BEFORE RETURNED TO BAHRAIN, GOB WAS NOT PREPARED TO PURSUE FURTHER THE PRIME MINISTER'S JUNE INITIATIVE. HOWEVER, IN THE CONTEXT OF SOME OF THE DISCUSSION WHICH FOLLOWED, IT WAS POSSIBLE SOME PRESENT MIGHT HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD AND LEFT THE MEETING UNDER IMPRESSION THAT THE SITUATION NOW IS AS IT WAS BEFORE JUNE. WOULD PRIME MINISTER GIVE ME HIS VIEWS?

5. PRIME MINISTER REPLIED THAT HE HAD INTENDED TO GIVE ME MORE TIME TO SETTLE IN BEFORE DISCUSSING THIS ISSUE BUT, SINCE I HAD RAISED IT, HE WOULD SPEAK FRANKLY. HE SAID IT WAS TRUE THAT HE HAD NOT PARTICIPATED SUBSTANTIVELY IN THE AMIR'S MEETING WITH CLEMENTS BECAUSE HE HAD TIME BEFORE THE MEETING ONLY TO WORK WITH AMIR AND SHAIKH HAMAD ON CONTENT OF SHAIKH HAMAD'S MEETING WITH CLEMENTS. PRIME MINISTER SAID BY UNDERSTANDING OF INITIAL EXCHANGE ON SUBJECT, DESCRIBED ABOVE, WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 MANAMA 01685 01 OF 02 261616Z

"APPROXIMATELY CORRECT". HE THEN LAUNCHED INTO LENGTHY MONOLOGUE ON HISTORY OF GOB'S DECISIONS ABOUT MIDEASTFOR SINCE 1973. HE STRESSED POINTS MADE BY HAMAD, REPORTED IN MANAMA 1682, TO EFFECT THAT BAHRAIN MUST BE ABLE TO DEFEND ITSELF, IF ONLY FOR FEW HOURS, AND BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE ITS SHARE TO REGIONAL DEFENSE, PARTICULARLY IF REGIONAL SECURITY PACT EVER MATERIALIZES. HE REVIEWED IN NOW-FAMILIAR TERMS BAHRAIN INTERNAL SITUATION AS IT HAS EFFECTED GOB ATTITUDES TOWARD MIDEASTFOR AND NOTED THAT

OVER PAST YEAR SITUATION HAS IMPROVED ENOUGH TO SUPPORT HIS JUNE INITIATIVE BUT ONLY IF US RESPONDS VISIBLY AND POSITIVELY TO BAHRAIN'S DEFENSE NEEDS.

6. PRIME MINISTER THEN TICKED OFF ALL THAT BAHRAIN'S NEIGHBORS ARE DOING FOR THEIR OWN DEFENSE, EMPHASIZING THAT US IS SUPPLYING, AND INDEED IS "NATURAL SUPPLIER" OF MUCH OF EQUIPMENT INVOLVED. HE WENT ON THAT BAHRAIN, ONE OF AMERICA'S BEST AND OLDEST FRIENDS IN GULF AREA, HOST TO US NAVY, IS NOT BEING TREATED FAIRLY BY US IN AREA OF ITS DEFENSE NEEDS. I INTERJECTED THAT US-BAHRAIN RELATIONS IN THIS FIELD HAD BEEN EXPANDING SLOWLY, IN TRAINING PARTICULARLY, AND THE AGREEMENT TO SEND A COMPREHENSIVE DEFENSE SURVEY TEAM MIGHT ULTIMATELY REVEAL OTHER AREAS WHERE WE COULD BE RESPONSIVE. I COMMENDED HELICOPTER SURVEY REPORT TO HIS ATTENTION, BUT OF COURSE AT THIS JUNCTURE MADE NO SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS. HE SAID THAT COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY TEAM WAS A GOOD IDEA AND ADDED THAT HE AND SHAIKH HAMAD VERY PLEASED WITH RESULTS OF CLEMENTS' MEETING WITH SHAIKH HAMAD. PRIME MINISTER RETURNED TO THEME OF HIS NEED FOR VISIBLE US RESPONSE TO BAHRAIN'S DEFENSE NEEDS AND LAID HEAVY STRESS ON US BEING SEEN TO STAND BY ITS FRIENDS IN FIRM AND VISIBLE MANNER. ONLY IF THIS IS THE CASE COULD HE "SHUT SOME MOUTHS AROUND HERE" AND DO WHAT HE "WANTED TO DO" ABOUT MIDEASTFOR.

7. PRIME MINISTER REFERRED TO FAILURE OF HIS NEIGHBORS TO GIVE PUBLIC SUPPORT TO MIDEASTFOR, THOUGH MOST SUPPORT IT IN PRIVATE, BUT HE DID NOT GO SO FAR AS TO MAKE PUBLIC SUPPORT THE SINE QUA

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PAGE 01 MANAMA 01685 02 OF 02 261607Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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O 261400Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 3683

INFO SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

CNO WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK IMMEDIATE

COMIDEASTFOR IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MANAMA 1685

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NON OF MIDEASTFOR'S CONTINUING PRESENCE HERE. HE SAID HE DOES NOT WORRY ABOUT UNJUSTIFIED CRITICISM OF MIDEASTFOR AS A US "BASE", WHICH HE SAID IT IS NOT, BUT THAT HE IS DISTURBED AND HIS ROOM FOR ACTION IS LIMITED BY THE "JUSTIFIABLE" CRITICISM THAT BAHRAIN DOES NOT GET WHAT IT NEEDS, HELP WITH ITS DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS, IN RETURN FOR BEARING THE POLITICAL BURDEN OF WHICH FONMIN SPOKE TO CLEMENTS.

8. I REVIEWED FOR PRIME MINISTER OUR VIEWS ON CONTRIBUTION OF MIDEASTFOR TO REGIONAL STABILITY, ITS WIDER ROLE IN INDIAN OCEAN CONTEXT, AND ITS PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE IN YEARS IMMEDIATELY AHEAD AS SYMBOL OF CONTINUING STRONG US INTEREST IN AREA AS A WHOLE, INCLUDING OUR EFFORTS TOWARD ARAB-ISRAEL PEACE. HE SAID HE AGREED WITH MOST OF MY POINTS BUT ADDED THAT HE AND BAHRAIN NEED MORE VISIBLE US SUPPORT IN DEFENSE AREA IF BAHRAIN IS TO BE ABLE TO CARRY ON "AS IN THE PAST". PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARY INTERRUPTED AT THIS POINT AND MEETING ENDED WITH UNDERSTANDING THAT SUBJECT OF MIDEASTFOR TENURE REMAINS OPEN FOR FURTHER, EARLY DISCUSSION.

9. COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATION. PRIME MINISTER'S JUNE INITIATIVE DOES NOT APPEAR DEAD, BUT IT MAY BE IN TROUBLE WITHIN GOB. UNWILLINGNESS OF GOB TO TO INTO FURTHER DETAILED DISCUSSIONS AT CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 MANAMA 01685 02 OF 02 261607Z

THIS TIME MAY ALSO REFLECT PRIVATE JUDGMENTS GOB HAS MADE ABOUT US DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE, THOUGH MY EXPOSURE TO GOB OFFICIALS IS TOO RECENT TO MAKE EVEN GOOD GUESS, THAT PRIME MINISTER'S ANNOYANCE AT DELAY IN INVITATION TO WASHINGTON (AND I FELT TODAY THAT HE PROBABLY WAS QUITE ANNOYED AT THE TIME) HELPED PROMPT GOB TO DECIDE TO "UNLEASH" FOREIGN MINISTER DURING CLEMENTS' VISIT. LASTLY, AND OF COURSE OBVIOUSLY, GOB MAY HAVE USED OCCASION OF CLEMENTS' VISIT, AS WELL TIME PRESSURES THEY KNOW NAVY FACES, TO RAISE OUR ANXIETY AND, THUS, THE ANTE. I DO NOT BELIEVE WE SHOULD AT THIS POINT TAKE THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S VIEWS AS EXPRESSED TO CLEMENTS AS THE FIRM VIEW OF THE GOB. THE AMIR HIMSELF LEFT THE DOOR OPEN DURING HIS MEETING WITH CLEMENTS AND THE PRIME MINISTER DID NOT CLOSE IT WITH ME TODAY. FOREIGN MINISTER'S OPPOSITION TO MIDEASTFOR IS WELL KNOWN AND OF LONG STANDARDS AND I BELIEVE THAT, IN ABSENCE OF SPECIFIC SUPPORT FOR HIS POSITION BY AMIR, SHAIKH HAMAD OR PRIME MINISTER, WE SHOULD AVOID REACTING TOO STRONGLY TO FACT, HOWEVER DISTURBING AT THE TIME, THAT HE WAS ALLOWED AGAIN TO AIR HIS VIEWS DURING CLEMENTS' VISIT.

10. REQUEST DEPARTMENT GIVE CONSIDERATION TO COORDINATING MY

NEXT DISCUSSION OF MIDEASTFOR WITH INFORMATION FOR GOB ABOUT
ARRIVAL OF COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY TEAM. INFORMING GOB THAT WE
ARE WILLING TO SELL HELICOPTERS OUGHT TO BE DELAYED, PERHAPS
TO THE OCCASION WHEN GOB LEARNS OF DATE FOR ARRIVAL OF NEW TEAM.
ALSO, I FEEL THAT RATHER STUDIED ABSENCE THUS FAR, BY BOTH SIDES,
OF DIRECT LINKAGE BETWEEN MIDEASTFOR TENURE AND OUR CONSIDERATION
OF BAHRAIN'S DEFENSE NEEDS PERHAPS OUGHT TO BE DROPPED IN NEAR
FUTURE. RECOMMEND, THEREFORE, THAT WHEN SURVEY TEAM COMPOSITION,
MANDATE AND TENTATIVE DATES SET, I BE INSTRUCTED INFORM GOB OF
THIS INFORMATION, AS WELL AS OF OUR WILLINGNESS TO SELL THE HELI-
COPTERS, AND TO DO SO IN CONTEXTS BOTH OF NAVY'S NEED FOR EXTENSION
NOW AND OF PRIME MINISTER'S ALMOST-DIRECT LINKAGE TODAY BETWEEN
WHAT WE MIGHT DO IN MILITARY AREA AND MIDEASTFOR TENURE. DEPT.
IS OF COURSE IN BEST POSITION TO JUDGE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS
CONTAINED REFTEL (B) BUT IN VIEW OF FACT THAT PRIME MINISTER TODAY
DID NOT SUPPORT ALL OF FONMIN'S NEGATIVISM, THOSE ACTIONS MIGHT
BE PREMATURE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NAVAL FORCES, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MIDEASTFOR
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 OCT 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MANAMA01685
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760399-0876
From: MANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761018/aaaaaoym.tel
Line Count: 240
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 MANAMA 1681
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <10 SEP 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER
TAGS: MARR, MASS, PFOR, BA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006